

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 05257 070105Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----127231 070111Z /70

O 070005Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1558

S E C R E T GUATEMALA 5257

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: NU, GT
SUBJ: NICARAGUA: COSTA RICAN INITIATIVE

REF: STATE 225348

1. SUMMARY: WHILE HE DOES NOT PREJUDGE RESULTS OF FORTH-COMING CONVERSATION HERE WITH COSTA RICAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND DESCRIBES PRESIDENT CARAZO'S INITIATIVE AS "PRAISEWORTHY," PRESIDENT LUCAS HAS SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT COSTA RICA'S ACCEPTABILITY TO SOMOZA AS MEDIATOR. HE IS ALSO CONCERNED TO FIND SOME APPROACH WHICH WOULD NOT WOUND SOMOZA'S SENSIBILITIES AND HENCE BE SELF-DEFEATING. HE SPECULATES THAT SALVADOR, HONDURAS, OR GUATEMALA WOULD HAVE BETTER CHANCE OF SUCCESS AS MEDIATOR, AND APPEARS TO SEE DISADVANTAGES IN ANY COSTA RICAN INVOLVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. I CALLED ON PRESIDENT LUCAS AT 3 PM TODAY (SEPT 6) AND CARRIED OUT DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS IN REFTEL. LUCAS DESCRIBED THE COSTA RICAN INITIATIVE AS PRAISEWORTHY BUT EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE CHANCES OF A SUCCESSFUL MEDIATION FROM THAT SOURCE. HE REASONED THAT COSTA RICA WAS ALREADY SUSPECT IN SOMOZA'S EYES BECAUSE OF ITS ASSOCIATIONS WITH THE SANDINISTAS. AT ONE POINT HE NOTED THAT "COMANDANTE CERO" WAS HIMSELF A "COSTA RICAN," AND
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CALLED THE PRESENCE OF A SOVIET EMBASSY IN SAN JOSE ANOTHER PREJUDICIAL FACTOR FOR SOMOZA. (I SENSED AN IMPLICATION THAT LUCAS ALSO BLAMED COSTA RICA'S TOLERANCE OF A SOVIET PRESENCE AS AT LEAST A FACTOR IN THE NICARAGUAN IMBROGLIO.)

3. LUCAS EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT A SALVADORAN, HONDURAN OR GUATEMALAN MEDIATION EFFORT WOULD HAVE BETTER PROSPECTS,

ALTHOUGH HE SAID HE FELT UNCOMFORTABLE WITH ANYTHING SMACKING OF INTERVENTION IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF A NEIGHBOR AND WAS NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE IDEA OF A COMMON CENTRAL AMERICAN MEDIATION. CONSENSUS WOULD BE DIFFICULT, AND THERE WAS THE PROBABILITY THAT A GIVEN COUNTRY WOULD BE SADDLED WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR "COLLECTIVE" DECISIONS NOT ENTIRELY ACCEPTABLE TO IT. IN ANY EVENT, UNLESS A WAY WERE FOUND TO AVOID WOUNDING SOMOZA'S FEELINGS, A MEDIATION EFFORT WOULD BE DOOMED. SOMOZA SHOULD "INVITE" MEDIATION; IT COULD NOT BE IMPOSED ON HIM AND BE EXPECTED TO WORK.

4. HE ALSO EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM THAT THE GUARDIA NACIONAL WOULD FOLLOW SUIT EVEN IF SOMOZA AGREED TO STEP DOWN. THE GN HAD A DEEP STAKE IN RETAINING THEIR AUTHORITY AND ALSO HAD THE EXAMPLE BEFORE THEM OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO BATISTA'S ARMY IN NOT DISSIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES. THE GN WOULD HOLD ON TENACIOUSLY.

5. LUCAS SAID HE WAS "DEEPLY CONCERNED" ABOUT EVENTS IN NICARAGUA AND NOTED THAT A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM THAN CUBA WOULD BE PRESENTED FOR CENTRAL AMERICAN BY A COMMUNIST NICARAGUA. NEVERTHELESS, WHILE HE WOULD NOT PREJUDGE THE OUTCOME OF HIS CONVERSATION WITH COSTA RICAN FOREIGN MINISTER CALDERON, HE COULD NOT BE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS OF A MEDIATION INVOLVING COSTA RICA.

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HE VOLUNTEERED, FINALLY, THAT HE WOULD NOT BE AVERSE TO A MEETING OF CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS TO REVIEW THE SITUATION.

6. COMMENT: I WOULD ONLY EMPHASIZE THAT, WHILE I BELIEVE PRESIDENT LUCAS WILL DISCUSS COSTA RICAN INITIATIVE IN GOOD FAITH, HE APPROACHES THIS ISSUE FROM A VERY CONSERVATIVE PREMISE ABOUT WHAT CAN USEFULLY BE DONE, A DESIRE TO AVOID UNNECESSARY PITFALLS OF PREMATURE ACTION, AND A STRONG BIAS AGAINST A LEADING ROLE FOR COSTA RICA IN WHATEVER MAY BE DONE.

7. DEPARTMENT REPEAT AS DESIRED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, MEETINGS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GUATEM05257
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840166-1810
Format: TEL
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780994/aaaadaab.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 870a6956-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 78 STATE 225348
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1522417
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NICARAGUA: COSTA RICAN INITIATIVE
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, US, NU, GT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/870a6956-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014